

TROOPS TO TEACHERS  
IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2007

**HON. DORIS O. MATSUI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 30, 2007*

Ms. MATSUI. Madam Speaker, my colleague, Mr. PETRI, and I are reintroducing the Troops to Teachers Improvement Act. I am proud to bring this bipartisan effort before the House in the newly-elected 110th Congress. I first learned about the Troops to Teachers program at a California Purple Heart Veterans Day event in my district. Two different veterans who are participating in Troops to Teachers spoke with me about how the program offered them the chance to continue to contribute to our country. After serving their country in the Armed Forces, they were now able to teach in high-need school districts.

With a slogan like, "Proud to Serve Again," Troops to Teachers is a unique program that provides stipends to military retirees to obtain the necessary certification for a second career in teaching. Equally important, the program places much-needed math, science and special education teachers in the classroom. In fact, over 55 percent of Troops to Teachers participants teach in these critical areas. Right now, our country is seeing 7 percent of its teaching force leave every year, and we have a need for highly-qualified science and math teachers. Additionally, veterans who participate in the Troops to Teachers program fill another void for male and ethnic minority teachers. Qualities learned in the military including: discipline, problem solving and leadership skills make veterans ideal role models for our students. Simply put, the Troops to Teachers program has never been more important.

Since first learning about the Troops to Teachers program, I have had the pleasure of hearing many stories of how participants' lives have changed after transitioning from the military to the classroom. One of my constituents has such a story. After 21 years in the Air Force, Kelly Sullivan retired from the military, with two young children to care for. Using a \$3,000 award from Troops to Teachers, she was able to pay for graduate school classes, as well as nine required teaching certification exams. Needless to say, the award was a financial relief for her, especially as she set out to begin her second career.

Kelly is now teaching English at Hiram Johnson High School in Sacramento. She has found that her two decades in the Air Force gave her the maturity, wisdom and life experiences that enable her to motivate and encourage her students to succeed in school. These skills are especially important as gangs and increased violence are all too prevalent in her school's neighborhood. One thing is for sure, when her students need help Kelly is there—thanks to Troops to Teachers.

Kelly is a prime example of the goal of the Troops to Teachers program, which was authorized in 1993 to help members of the military obtain teaching credentials to teach in large districts with low-income schools. A variety of retired, separated, active duty and transitioning military members and veterans—including disabled veterans—are eligible to participate. Those who are interested are required to have a bachelor's or advanced degree. If applying for a vocational or technical

teaching position, candidates are required to have at least 6 years of experience in the field. The program has successfully recruited and placed almost 10,000 veterans in school districts since it was created. In my home state of California, 571 veterans are currently participating in the program.

Unfortunately, a small change under the No Child Left Behind Act, NCLB, of 2001 greatly affected where veterans could fulfill their teaching obligation. In some areas of the country, retiring military and veterans interested in the program now have to drive 50 to 100 miles to find an eligible school. This has resulted in a 20–30 percent drop-off in veteran participation, which has seriously hindered this productive and necessary program.

The bill that my esteemed colleague Mr. PETRI and I are reintroducing today would fix this error. It would allow participants to fulfill their teaching obligation at any school considered high-need under NCLB, meaning that the school receives Title I funding. Prior to the NCLB change, participants were able to fulfill their teaching obligation in any school within my district in Sacramento, as they all receive Title I funding. However, under the more restrictive rule, only 211 of the 350 schools in my district are eligible. Currently, 61 percent of the high schools in my district are not eligible.

I continue to believe in this program and want to see disabled and retiring military offered a second chance at serving our country. Just last week, the Troops to Teachers program had a conference in Washington, DC. Once again, we heard stories of participants' dedication to serving our country and the sense of fulfillment they receive from educating future generations. Additionally, the program brings important math, science, and foreign language expertise to our classroom and fills a critical need among our educators. These characteristics make Troops to Teachers an excellent source of highly-qualified educators.

Mr. PETRI and I are committed to fulfilling the intent of this program, and we introduce this bill so that more veterans, like my constituent Kelly, will continue to be able to serve our country—whether in the military or in the classroom. I look forward to swiftly passing this bipartisan bill in the 110th Congress and urge my colleagues to continue to work to support the Troops to Teachers program.

DISDAIN OF AIR PASSENGER  
DELAYS

**HON. NICK J. RAHALL II**

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 30, 2007*

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, recently, I received an offer from American Express entitled, Travel Delay Protection. That's right for \$9.95 per person per trip you can get an insurance plan to safeguard against flight delays and their associated hassles and costs. Has American aviation really been brought to this level Madam Speaker? Like Lloyds of London of old responding to sinking ships, American Express simply sees a modern opportunity in a far too sinking industry.

We have been told that the recent debacle in Texas in which passengers were held hostage for almost a day, was an anomaly. We

are told that to legislatively address the basic rights of air passengers is an overreaction.

Well, Madam Speaker, if American Express, no dummy of a company, sees profit in the misfortunes of America's airline industry, I think Congress at least should listen to the collective voice of countless aggrieved passengers. Especially, Congress should hear passengers who suffer regularly from flight delays and disruptions, but because they are not caught up in the major anomaly of the season, they don't get to air their disdain on the national news. They just suffer.

RECOGNIZING THE CAREER AND  
RETIREMENT OF MARGARET  
BLACKSHERE, PRESIDENT OF  
THE ILLINOIS AFL/CIO

**HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 30, 2007*

Mr. COSTELLO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the career and retirement of Margaret Blackshere, President of the Illinois AFL/CIO.

Margaret Blackshere, who has been an effective leader and advocate at all levels of organized labor, began her career as a kindergarten teacher in Madison, Illinois in the 1960's. Her first involvement in organized labor began with the efforts of her district's teachers to secure both just compensation and more of a voice in the decisions that directly influenced the educational processes in their district.

From that early involvement, Ms. Blackshere would become president of her local union and then Statewide Vice President of the Illinois Federation of Teachers. She served as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Illinois AFL/CIO before winning election as the first woman President of that organization in 2000, the position from which she is now retiring.

As president of the Illinois AFL/CIO, with 1,500 local affiliates and over 1 million members, Margaret Blackshere has had significant influence in the direction of organized labor, not only at the state and national level, but internationally as well. As president, Ms. Blackshere has been responsible for maintaining unity within the Illinois AFL/CIO even though there have been signs of discord in other locations during recent years.

In addition to her tireless work for her labor organizations, Ms. Blackshere has been involved in a number of civic and political organizations as well. These organizations include the Alliance for Retired Americans Labor-Management Cooperation Council, United Way of Illinois, Voices for Illinois Children, Workers Compensation Advisory Board, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago. She has also been a delegate to the Democratic National Convention and has been a member of the Democratic National Committee.

While Ms. Blackshere is retiring from her position as President of the Illinois AFL/CIO, she has indicated that she will continue to consult, assist and volunteer her time for the causes that have been important to her. For those in organized labor and for everyone who appreciates the positive impact that the labor movement has had in our overall quality of